AP U.S. History
Van Over
APUSH Secondary Sources: Historian Article Reviews

Writing an article review as an assignment in this course has at least four important objectives:
 1) effective writing, 2) gaining substantive knowledge about a particular topic, 3) forming an understanding of the nature and use of historical research, 4) an ability to think critically about the work of other historians that aren't your textbook authors. An article review goes beyond mere summary and inquiries into the overall worth of the work.

1) Introduction
The introduction should establish the context for the historical period and for the subject matter of the article. So, an article about the genetic evidence proving Thomas Jefferson fathered children with one of his slaves would likely set the context by describing Thomas Jefferson as a historical figure. When writing about the subject matter of an article, it may help to remember that the articles you read in AP U.S. History are not likely just going to be someone's report "about" something; generally, our articles are by authors who are addressing a historical <u>controversy</u>.   In these types of writings, the <u>controversy</u> examined in the article may surround a question—even if the question is not explicitly stated. With our example of Jefferson's genetic record , one may find that the article addresses the question, "does Jefferson's DNA ancestry change the historical value of his accomplishments?" Your introduction then, would not only identify the context of the historical time period (Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, major contributor to "The Federalist Papers," Secretary of State, Democratic Republican, and president) but would also identify the context of the article (is Jefferson discredited because he defended the practice of slavery, owned his own slaves, and yet carried on a long-running sexual affair with one of his slaves, Sally Hemmings). Again: **what is the historical context of the article's subject matter, and what is the context/reason for which the article was written?** The opening statement takes the readers from where they presumably stand in point of knowledge and brings them to the article under review; e.g., "In the article 'A Little Commonwealth' John Demos analyzes the structure and development of Puritan society in seventeenth century Massachusetts."

2) Critical Summary: Thesis, Use of Evidence, and Evaluation of Argument
Explain the thesis of the article. What is the author's takeaway point—the point that you're supposed to get when you're finished with the article? Summarize the contents of the article <u>indicating the specific evidence that the author uses to how the thesis is developed</u>. **What are the specific examples that the author uses to "prove" their argument/thesis?** While this will be the longest part of your review, you should make sure that your paper **does not become a mere summary without analysis**. <u>How does the author use the evidence to support the thesis and secondary points?</u>

3) Historical Relationship
Discuss the ways in which the article contributes to your understanding of the historical period (e.g., consider a questions such as "what does the article teach a reader (you) about the Colonial Period?) Also, consider: why is this an important article for you to read as we study a particular historical period?
Be very specific, *noting how the article contributes to your knowledge of the historical period*.

4) Conclusion
Briefly discuss the major strengths and weaknesses of the article, including how well the author has proved their point. In other words, **what are the strongest and the points of the article, and how well does the author "prove" their thesis?**

5) Writing the Review
- At the top of the page, give the title and author of the work under review (centered).
- Type the review, double-spaced, MLA format. The typical review is 300 to 1000 words long (1-3 pages). Do not exceed three pages.
- If you quote from the article, simply follow the quotation with the page number(s) in parenthesis. E.g., "The author makes the incredible assertion that Jefferson turned out to be one of America's worst presidents." (123)
- Limit the number of quotes you use. When you do use quotes, keep them as short as possible.
- Keep your writing formal. Do not use personal pronouns (like "I," or "we," or "you"). Avoid the use of slang or colloquial expressions. See this YouTube video for <u>Academic Writing and Conventions</u>.

Format: MLA. Don't forget—the name block goes in the upper left hand corner. It includes your name, instructor's name, course title and date. One inch margins on all sides.

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Article Review Rubric

10-8

The review contains **a clear delineation of the author's thesis** and a discussion of the guiding questions that prompted the writing of the article. The review articulates the author's major contentions and **provides analysis** of the author's arguments. The review enumerates how the article contributes to a better understanding of the historical period. The review explains the strengths/weaknesses of the article and discusses the relationship of the article to other readings, opinions, or viewpoints.

7-5

The review contains a description of the thesis and the guiding questions. The review is more summative than analytic. The review lists or describes, or summarizes the author's contentions and supporting arguments. The review makes little or no reference to understanding the historical period. The review may discuss the strengths/weaknesses but without analysis, makes a minimal attempt at establishing historical relationship.

4-2

The review restates the thesis without any attempt at analysis, or description of the guiding questions. The review restates the author's contentions without analysis. The review is mostly descriptive without analysis or any attempt to evaluate the strengths/weaknesses or historical relationship.

0-1

The review provides a mere enumeration of the main points. The review contains an inadequate description. The review reports about rather than analyzes. It is a mere summation without synthesis.

The following are the grade equivalents for these scores.

10	100%	100 pts.
9	94%	94 pts.
8	88%	88 pts.
7	84%	84 pts.
6	80%	80 pts.
5	78%	78 pts.
4	75%	75 pts.
3	70%	70 pts.
2	64%	64 pts.
1	50%	50 pts.
0	0%	0 pts.